



Finding Your Voice: Advocating for Children in Public Schools



Finding Your Voice: Advocating for Children in Public Schools

- Understanding the Role and Responsibility of Board Members as Advocates
- Developing Legislative Priorities
- Sharing our Legislative Priorities at the Local, State, and National Levels
- Communicating our Agenda and Telling our Story
- Thinking Bigger as a "Team of 8"



What is Advocacy?

Definition: public support for or recommendation of a particular issue, cause or policy



The Role of School Board members as Advocates for Public Education:

- Serve as the primary advocates for public education
- Act as guardians of the public trust
- Be advocates for educational excellence for the community's youth and commit to put those interests first



The Responsibility of School Board members as Advocates:

- Making difficult choices in the best interest of public schools
- Being willing to self-sacrifice and expose oneself to criticism
- Maintaining relationships and closeness to voters
- Being an exemplar of democracy in action
- Advocating to other local elected officials and state/federal lawmakers



How does a school board develop Legislative Priorities?

KNOW THE ISSUES!

“She's a poised, thoughtful woman whose interest in education issues was triggered by her experience as the mother of three daughters in Fort Bend County public schools.”

- Houston Chronicle columnist Mike Snyder about his interview with Kristin Tassin.





What are the current Legislative Priorities for the FBISD School Board?





Advocacy and the FBISD Legislative Priorities



Advocate



Communicate



Collaborate



Where does the School Board advocate for their legislative priorities?

Local Level

Business Community

- Fort Bend Chamber Education Division
- Greater Fort Bend Economic Development Council

Local Elected Officials and Community

- Fort Bend County Elected Officials Legislative Retreat
- City and School District Joint Public Meetings



Where does the School Board advocate for their legislative priorities?

Regional Level

- Go Public Gulf Coast
- Gulf Coast Association of School Boards
- Greater Houston Partnership

State Level

- Austin visits to State legislators
- Texas Association of School Boards – actively involved
- Collaborate with the Equity Center, Fast Growth Schools Coalition, Texas School Alliance, Texas Association of School Administrators

Federal Level

- Washington trips and local visits to congressmen and senators





The Communications and Social Media Strategy



Set the basics –
Establish goals and
objectives



Collect Insights –
Determine audience and
platform



Make choices – Define
the journey



Develop the story –
Develop content



Plan Ahead – Align the
overall communications
strategy



Communicate – Tell the
Story



Measure Results –
Validate and readjust as
needed



Communicate, Communicate, Communicate

- **Superintendent Communications** – frequent messages and blogs to staff, parents and community
- **Board President Interviews** - about Legislative Priorities in media
- **Digital magazines** - published and promoted to all FBISD taxpayers sharing legislative priorities information

www.fortbendisd.com/magazine





Communicate, Communicate, Communicate

- **Board Listening Tours** – outreach meetings held throughout of District
- **Presentations and face-to-face meetings**
- **Social Media** - (including videos, hashtags, and tags for legislators)
 - Thank the legislators who support public education
 - Post messages in support or opposition for bills
 - Share positive stories on Facebook and Twitter





Power of the Op-ed in the Public Square

I am not an 'educrat': an open letter to Dan Patrick

I am a parent and a proud Texas conservative

Kristin Tassin, Fort Bend ISD | January 20, 2017



HOUSTON★CHRONICLE



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Education proposal skepticism

By Jim Rice

During the 84th Texas legislative session last year, state lawmakers considered two voucher or school choice bills, Senate Bill 276 and Senate Bill 642. Though nothing came of these bills, there is a movement afoot to again consider vouchers under the new name of "Education Savings Accounts" during the upcoming 85th session, which begins

restrict student enrollment to only those students whom they want. "Education Savings Accounts" or "vouchers" will hurt, not support, the state's public schools and will jeopardize the quality of education available to most students.

The Legislature has a constitutional duty to support and maintain a system of public schools in this state (Texas Constitution Article 7, Section 1). State statute imposes a further duty upon





The Impact of the Team of "8"





Speaking Louder: Speaking with One voice

“It is very important that the community hears the voice of this Board loud and clear, which is unanimous in the adoption of all five of these resolutions. ”

Kristin Tassin, Board President



Thinking Bigger: Joining Forces



Houston area school districts join forces for Texas legislative session

Coalition taking legislative agenda to statehouse

By Sebastian Herrera and Margaret Kadifa, Houston Chronicle | February 24, 2017 | Updated: February 24, 2017 10:07pm



Photo: Houston Chronicle



Growing Stronger: Building a Coalition





How can you Find Your Voice as a Board Leadership Academy Member?

- **Be proactive**
- **Be committed**
- **Build relationships**
- **Be good communicators**
- **Be bold, persistent, courageous and passionate**



BLA Cohort: Advocacy In Action

| Past | Present | Future |
|---|--|--|
| What issues related to public education have you been passionate about in the past? How have you advocated for those issues? Were you successful? | What issues related to public education are you currently passionate about? How are you currently advocating for those issues? What strategies seem to work best? Least? | Which of the FBISD Board Legislative Priorities aligns with your passion for public education? How can you foresee yourself advocating for those issues? |